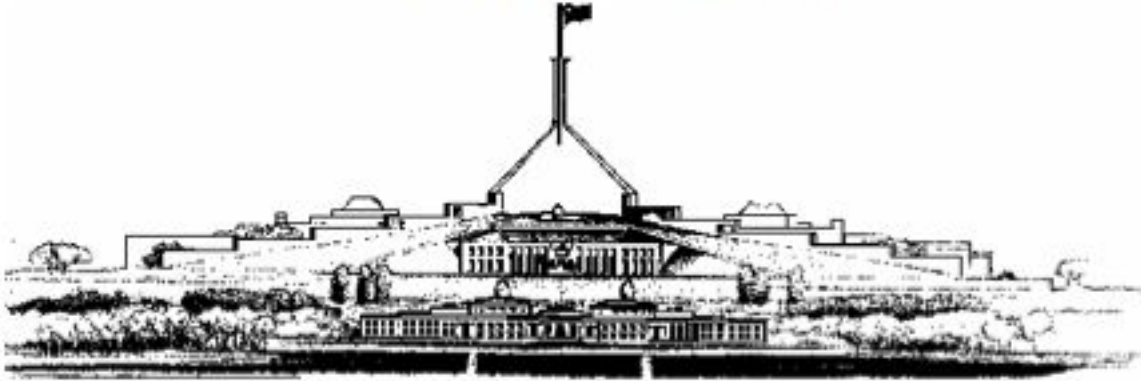




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH**

**Address-in-Reply**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 25 October 2010**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

---

## SPEECH

**Date** Monday, 25 October 2010  
**Page** 1329  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Andrews, Karen, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mrs ANDREWS** (McPherson) (5.28 pm)—Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am proud and honoured to make my first speech to the 43rd parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia as the member for McPherson, and I thank the people of McPherson for the trust that they have put in me to represent their interests both on the Gold Coast and here in this place. We have all followed very different paths to arrive here and our individual experiences have shaped the people that we are today.

I was born in Brisbane and grew up in Townsville where I attended Townsville Grammar School, which, at the time that my sister and I went there, was a boys boarding school and a day school for boys and girls. I chose maths and science subjects because those were the subjects that I enjoyed and did well at. Through years 11 and 12 my results were similar to two of the boys in my class and towards the end of year 12 when we were looking at future career options, the boys were encouraged to become engineers and I was encouraged to become a maths teacher. My response to that though was to do some research and find out exactly what engineers did and so, after looking at the engineering subjects and the work options for engineers, I came to the conclusion that engineering would probably be a good career for me.

I graduated as a mechanical engineer, starting work with the Queensland Electricity Generating Board initially in engineering design before moving to Gladstone Power Station to work in plant maintenance. My next job was in the oil industry in Victoria. That was the first job where I was directly or indirectly supervising employees, including fitters, electricians, store workers and drivers, and I was working with them on the shop floor. At that site I was the youngest plant engineer that they had ever employed and I was also the first female. There were some bitter demarcation disputes in the early to mid-1980s, and the oil industry was certainly no exception. In order to keep the plant running effectively, I needed to be able to work with the employees and get them to willingly, or perhaps unwillingly, do the work that was needed. So dealing with demarcations in the oil industry as a young engineer was my introduction to industrial relations.

At the time that I studied engineering, the degree course did not include any subjects in industrial relations, and when I first started as a supervisor I had

a very limited understanding of industrial awards and how to interpret the provisions. I enrolled in a graduate diploma in industrial relations so that I could learn more about the theory of IR, but the practical skills I learnt on the job. Shortly after I had completed the course I was offered a job as an industrial advocate with the national employer association, working in their metal, engineering and construction industries. My job was to represent the interests of employers, primarily small businesses, in negotiations with their employees about terms and conditions of employment.

After working for a number of years as an industrial advocate and in the broader field of human resources I was approached by the Victorian government to head up the industrial relations branch for the Department of Health and Community Services, as it was known at the time. The mid-nineties was a critical time for industrial relations in Victoria. The health minister that I was responsible to was the Hon. Marie Tehan, a politician and a woman that I hold in very high regard who was a significant influence on my decision to pursue a career in politics. So I am delighted to be a member of the 43rd Parliament alongside Marie Tehan's son, the member for Wannon, Dan Tehan.

For the last 15 years I have worked as an industrial relations specialist throughout Australia and New Zealand, where the focus of my work became alternative dispute resolution and, in particular, mediation. This work continued when, in 2002, I moved back to the Gold Coast with my family and we made the McPherson electorate our home. The division of McPherson, named after the McPherson Range, was first proclaimed in 1949, and the first elected member was Sir Arthur Fadden, later to become Prime Minister of Australia. I am the seventh member for McPherson and the 1066th person elected to the federal parliament.

McPherson covers an area of approximately 230 kilometres, from Clear Island Waters in the north to Mudgeeraba, Tallebudgera Valley and Currumbin Valley in the west and to the Queensland-New South Wales border at Coolangatta in the south. Our eastern boundary is the Pacific Ocean and includes the very well-known and popular beaches of Kirra, Palm Beach and Burleigh Heads. We have the best surfing beaches, with world renowned surf breaks at Snapper Rocks, Kirra and Burleigh. We have the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, which has been attracting visitors from all

over the world for the last 60 or so years. We have Tallebudgera Creek and the Currumbin estuary, where so many families have holidayed and return each year to continue that tradition. We have rock pools and some great walks through the Currumbin Valley and of course some fantastic walks along our beaches.

We have great shopping. We have our beachside markets at Coolangatta and Burleigh, emerging designers with boutique shops at Palm Beach, all the way through to our newly renovated and expanded Robina Town Centre at the north of the electorate. We have music festivals. We support young talent looking for the opportunity to reach their potential. We have kite festivals, film festivals and beachside art exhibitions. We have warm temperatures and lots of sunshine. We have something for everyone. We are the entry point, the gateway, to Queensland.

Today there are three things that I wish to speak about because they are important to McPherson and they define who I am and what I stand for: infrastructure, business and veterans. We have had significant population growth in South-East Queensland, and specifically the Gold Coast, in recent years, and this trend is predicted to continue. I have spoken to many local residents and business owners, and the issue that is raised with me the most is the lack of transport infrastructure on the southern Gold Coast. They are concerned that the bottlenecks on the M1 cause delays as they travel to and from work and that the limited public transport on the southern Gold Coast means that owning a private vehicle becomes almost a necessity.

In 2007 both the Howard government and the then Labor opposition promised \$455 million to upgrade the M1. The priority area was identified as Nerang to Tugun, with an upgrade from four lanes to a six- to eight-lane motorway. To date the M1 from Merrimac south to the border remains at four lanes. Not only does this impact on local residents and tourists but it has a significant economic effect, as the M1 is a major transport artery from New South Wales through to Queensland. Upgrading of the M1 must become a priority. Heavy rail, servicing Brisbane to the Gold Coast, goes only as far south as Varsity Lakes, and that station was opened only in the last 12 months. It took 11 years to lay 4.1 kilometres of track from Robina to Varsity Lakes, which is just one station. At that rate it will take about 40 years to get heavy rail to Coolangatta, which is simply not good enough. Stage 1 of the light rail project, which will service the northern end of the Gold Coast, is scheduled to come on line in 2014, but there is no evidence that the light rail will be extended to the southern Gold Coast, even in the medium term.

Transport infrastructure becomes an even more pressing issue when we take into account, as we must do, the Gold Coast Airport at Coolangatta. It currently has more than five million passenger movements per year and has experienced 10 per cent growth in the last year alone. We cannot have visitors arrive at the airport and face a bottleneck when they are trying to travel to other parts of the Gold Coast. Further, there is the very real prospect that the 2018 Commonwealth Games will be hosted on the Gold Coast, and we must ensure that we meet the needs and expectations of athletes, officials and visitors. The issue for us is that traffic movement on the southern Gold Coast is already restricted and there are no real plans in place to address the needs of the area. However, we should not consider the M1, heavy rail and light rail in isolation. We must consider the overall needs of the Gold Coast and work towards an integrated solution. I call on all levels of government to work together and to also work with the community—the residents and the businesses—to find solutions to this most important issue.

Whilst we have a diverse business base—and I will speak more about that later—tourism is one of the Gold Coast's main industries and employers. Even though there are certainly some large operators on the Gold Coast, many small and medium businesses are dependent on the tourism dollar. It is fair to say that there has been a downturn in tourism in recent years and our businesses are hurting. Our accommodation providers tell me that occupancy rates are down and that room rates are significantly discounted in order to attract tourists and to compete with the larger providers at the northern end of the Gold Coast. Local businesses that rely on tourists are suffering. Coffee shops, newsagents, restaurants, local corner stores, tour operators and retailers are all struggling to make ends meet. We cannot afford to approach this issue, however, with a doom-and-gloom attitude. We must continue to look at ways to attract visitors to the Gold Coast and to encourage those who come for events to stay for a week or 10 days and not simply make a fly-in fly-out visit. Over the coming months and years, I will continue to work with our local businesses and tour operators to identify strategies to attract visitors to our area, and I will always promote the best interests of the Gold Coast.

As well as tourism, we have a significant manufacturing and engineering industry and also retail, finance and education businesses. The common theme that is consistently raised with me by businesses across all industries is the amount of red tape and the associated cost to business of compliance. Further, the administration of reporting requirements takes business owners and operators away from their core business, further adding to costs. Having been a small business owner myself for many years, I understand

the frustration in having to comply with government regulations when what I really needed to do was meet the needs of my existing client base as well as look for further growth opportunities. I believe that we should work towards a lean government that minimises interference in our daily lives and that government should not impose unnecessary and onerous regulation and red tape on citizens or businesses.

I turn now to our veterans to whom I believe we owe a debt of gratitude. We should honour our veterans and never forget the sacrifices that they and their families made for us. McPherson has a large veteran community. I have had a long association with veterans through my father, William Weir, who was a veteran himself. Dad's story is similar to those of a number of World War II veterans. He enlisted in the RAAF in October 1944 with his mother's written permission as he was under the age of 21 years. After serving at a number of bases in Queensland, he served in Labuan and then spent 18 months in Japan with the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Like many veterans, dad never spoke much about his RAAF war service, particularly the time spent in Japan after the bombings. However, in later years, his pride in his RAAF service and fellow ex-service men and women led him to take on the position of National Secretary and Treasurer of the Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex Servicemen and Women—the TPIs. His tireless work for this organisation saw him awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia. To dad the medal meant that his voice for the welfare and support of TPI veterans had been and would continue to be heard, and I intend to carry on his work.

What are the skills and experience that I bring to this place? As an engineer, I understand project management and the importance of meeting realistic timelines. I understand the need to maintain a sound theoretical approach in order to enable the introduction of new technology and to balance the issues of costs, benefits, safety and quality. I know that, as an engineer, if I had recommended a project be undertaken without a thorough cost-benefit analysis, my judgement would have been questioned and, if I had proceeded to implementation without a rigorous analysis, I would have lost my job. As an industrial relations specialist, I understand the role that employees have to play in productivity and continuous quality improvement at the workplace. I know that adversarial industrial relations is outdated and has no place in modern and progressive workplaces. As an advocate, I am experienced at listening to the needs of others and representing the views of those in the workplace and in the community. As a parent, I understand the importance of health and education to our future generations and the need to nurture and encourage our

children. I want our children to have the opportunity to reach their full potential, whatever that may be. So, what do I believe in? In addition to what I have already said today, I believe in equal opportunity in the broadest possible sense. I believe in freedom of thought, worship, speech and association. I believe in a fair go.

To the members of the Liberal National Party who selected me as their candidate to represent the people of McPherson, I say thank you. To the President of the Liberal National Party, Bruce McIver, the executive and the staff of the Liberal National Party: congratulations and thank you for your outstanding efforts in the 2010 election and for your commitment to promoting the best interests of the party and upholding its principles. My thanks also go to Bruce Duncan, our regional chairman, and his wife, Muriel, who work tirelessly for the party throughout the Gold Coast region. To Peter and Lesley McKean, Ben Naday, Andy Lamont, John and Esther Leff, Peter and Mary Flynn, Jill Allen and Ann Nelson who went to extraordinary lengths to help the campaign, I say thank you. To our booth captains, scrutineers and booth workers, I say thank you. I could not have done it without you. To my campaign manager, Jeszaen Lee, who as well as all of his campaign tasks single-handedly organised information booths every weekend for weeks: thank you, you did a great job. To Glenn Snowdon: thank you for everything that you did for the campaign and your support for me. I could not have asked for more.

To my patron senator, Senator the Hon. Brett Mason: thank you for your support and encouragement. To the members and senators who visited McPherson and helped me in many ways—the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Tony Abbott; the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Julie Bishop; the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop; the Hon. Peter Dutton; the Hon. Sharman Stone; Scott Morrison; Greg Hunt; my electorate neighbours Steven Ciobo and Stuart Robert; Senator the Hon. George Brandis; Senator Barnaby Joyce; and Senator Russell Trood—I say thank you. I was helped enormously by our state members: the member for Currumbin, Jann Stuckey; the member for Mudgeeraba, Ros Bates; the member for Mermaid Beach, Ray Stevens; and the former member for Burleigh, Judy Gamin. I thank you for your support and friendship.

To my very good friend Susan Greenwood, who was diagnosed with terminal cancer two days before my preselection and passed away in May this year: it was my very great privilege to know you, Susan. To my good friends Jude Pettitt and Sue Kellogg: I thank you for your wise counsel, and I know that I can rely on you for more sage advice in years to come.

To Janelle Manders, Hamish Douglas and Natalie Douglas, who are here in the gallery today: you have been a wonderful support to me and to my family over the years and I thank you very much for that. Janelle, I have always found your positive outlook and your attitude to life refreshing.

To my sister, Ann, who now lives in Broome with her husband, Ken, and is unable to be here today: I could not have asked for a better sister. Ann, this was your first election campaign and you did a fantastic job. To my mother, Moya Weir, who is here in the gallery today: you have been such a wonderful role model throughout my life. Dad would be so proud of you, as we all are. To my father, William Weir OAM, who died in March this year: I miss you and I miss your pearls of wisdom.

To my husband, Chris: we have always had an equal partnership and we have always supported each other's career choices, even when it meant that those choices made life a little—or sometimes a lot—more complex. You have always been there when I needed you and I thank you for that. My final words today are to my three daughters: Emma who is 14, Jane who is 10 and Kate who is seven. Each of you played a part in my being here today as the member for McPherson, and I thank you for that. Girls: life will offer you many opportunities and many challenges. I encourage you to grasp every opportunity that comes your way with both hands. View each challenge that you face as an opportunity to learn and remember that, no matter what, you will get through it. Believe in yourself because you can do it. I believe in you.

Debate (on motion by **Ms King**) adjourned.